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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US, UR, CB, VN, VS, CH

SUBJ: NEW PERCEPTIONS AND DILEMMAS IN THAILAND'S FOREIGN POLICY

REF: A. BANGKOK'S 1974 A-282; B. BANGKOK'S 1974 A-300;

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C. BANGKOK 8355; D. BANGKOK 8746; E. BANGKOK'S 1975 A-47

INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY

1. THIS MESSAGE DISCUSSES SOME OF THE CHANGES THAT HAVE TAKEN PLACE IN THE THAI CONDUCT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS TOGETHER WITH THE REASONS THEREFOR; ASSESSES SOME OF THE NEW NATIONAL SECURITY DELEMMA'S THE THAI FACE, AND THEIR AGONIES AND CONFLICTS IN MEETING THESE CHALLENGES; AND CONSIDERS THE ROLE THAT THE U.S. AND THAILAND PLAY IN EACH OTHER'S POLICY DELIBERATIONS. LASTLY, WE PREDICT WHEN SOME OF THAILAND'S DILEMMAS WILL COME TO A HEAD.

2. LONG BEFORE INDOCHINA FELL, THAILAND WAS UNDERGOING A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE IN ITS FOREIGN POLICY. THIS CHANGE IS WELL UNDERWAY, BUT NOT YET COMPLETED. IT INVOLVES A PURPOSEFUL EXPANSION OF DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WITH EASTERN EUROPEAN AND ASIAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES; A CONSIDERABLE PARING DOWN AND INTENSIFIED REGULARIZATION UNDER MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PURVIEW OF RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.; AND AN ENHANCED AFFINITY WITH ASEAN NEIGHBORS THAT WILL PROBABLY STOP SHORT OF A FORMAL COLLECTIVE SECURITY ARRANGEMENT. THESE CHANGES REFLECT THE DIFFERENCES IN THE THAI INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION SINCE OCTOBER 1973, AND RESPOND TO THAI PERCEPTIONS OF THE CURRENT AND FUTURE REQUIREMENTS OF THAI NATIONAL SECURITY RESULTING FROM THE AMERICAN EGRESS FROM VIETNAM, AND LATER THE VIRTUALLY COMPLETE COMMUNIST VICTORY THROUGHOUT INDOCHINA.

3. THE COMBINED CHALLENGES FROM A COMMUNIST INDOCHINA AND FROM PEKING CONFRONT THE THAI WITH A SERIES OF PAINFUL NATIONAL SECURITY DILEMMAS. THE THAI GOAL IS DEALING WITH THESE PROBLEMS REMAINS AS BEFORE: TO ARRANGE TO HAVE OUTSIDE POWERS PROTECT THAILAND AND GUARANTEE ITS SOVEREIGNTY. RTG ACTIONS INDICATE THAT THAILAND WILL TAKE A MOLLIFYING RATHER THAN A BELLICOSE STAND AGAINST THE DRV AND PROBABLY THE INSURGENCY AS WELL.

4. THAI-U.S. RELATIONS HAVE CHANGED CONSIDERABLY BUT REMAIN IN A STATE OF FLUX PENDING THE CLARIFICATION OF OTHER FACTORS IN THE THAI FOREIGN POLICY EQUATION, AND BECAUSE OF THAI UNCERTAINTY REGARDING LONG-TERM U.S. POLICY IN THIS AREA.

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THE DIFFERING MESSAGES WE RECEIVE FROM OFFICIAL RTG CHANNELS AND FROM TOP MILITARY LEADERS REGARDING WITHDRAWAL OF OUR TROOPS FURTHER COMPLICATES THE U.S. FACTOR IN THAI DECISION MAKING. WE BELIEVE THAT EVEN THE MILITARY LEADERS WHO MOST WANT US TO STAY REALIZE THAT IN PRACTICAL TERMS WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PUBLICLY STATED OFFICIAL RTG MESSAGE.

5. ALL THESE CURRENT UNKNOWN'S WILL BECOME CLEARER WITHIN

THE NEXT SIX MONTHS WHEN THE TERMS OF THAI RELATIONS WITH THE CHINESE BECOME APPARENT, WHEN THE THAI HAVE A FURTHER NEGOTIATING ENCOUNTER WITH HANOI, AND WHEN THE COURSE OF THE RTG FY 76 BUDGET DEBATE GIVES A SHARPER PICTURE OF THE PRIORITIES NATIONAL DEFENSE AND COUNTERINSURGENCY ARE LIKELY TO RECEIVE. AT THE SAME TIME WE MAY ALSO SEE AN INCREASE IN VIETNAMESE SUPPORT FOR THE INSURGENTS TO BRING POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE RTG. THE THAI WILL PROBABLY SEE CONTINUING VALUE IN CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S., EVEN IF THOSE TIES ARE NOT PRIMARILY IN THE SECURITY FIELD. END SUMMARY.

EARLIER CHANGES IN THAI FOREIGN AFFAIRS

6. THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS, AND IN PARTICULAR FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI GHUNHAWAN, HAVE LONG ESPOUSED THE NEED TO PROMOTE THAI DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS WITH COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, AS WELL AS TO LENGTHEN SLIGHTLY THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THAILAND AND THE U.S. TO GIVE THE THAI SOME DIPLOMATIC ELBOW ROOM, WITHOUT HOWEVER ENDING OUR LONG BILATERAL FRIENDSHIP. IN THE PAST 18 MONTHS THE THAI HAVE MADE CONSIDERABLE INCREASES IN THEIR CONTACTS WITH EASTERN EUROPEAN AND ASIAN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, AND ARE CONTINUING IN THIS DIRECTION. FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI'S EAGER COURTSHIP OF PEKING IS THE CURRENT CULMINATION OF THIS POLICY.

7. CONCOMITANT WITH THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S PAINFULLY OBVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO PARE DOWN RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. TO PROPORTIONS THAT MFA CONSIDERED MANAGEABLE, AND TO REGULARIZE OUR ACTIVITIES UNDER MFA CONTROL. MFA'S LEADING ROLE IN THE SUMMER OF 1974 IN FORBIDDING P-3 RECONNAISSANCE FLIGHTS FROM UTAPAO OVER THE INDIAN OCEAN IS THE SALIENT EPISODE IN MFA'S WRESTING AWAY SOME OF SUPREME COMMAND'S MONOPOLY ON U.S.-THAI SECURITY MATTERS. NOW MFA
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IS CHAIRING THE REVIEW OF ALL BILATERAL AGREEMENTS, A ROLE WHICH GIVES IT CONSIDERABLE LEVERAGE OVER THE MILITARY IN SHAPING THE UPSHOT OF THE REVIEW. BUT THE CONTEST WITH THE THAI MILITARY OVER DOMINATION OF POLICY GOES ON.

8. MORE RECENTLY, AND ESPECIALLY SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF PHNOM PENH AND SAIGON, MFA HAS SOMETIMES CREATED THE PUBLIC IMPRESSION OF BILATERAL DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN THE RTG AND THE U.S. THE CUTTING EDGE OF THIS EFFORT HAS BEEN A SERIES OF MFA PRESS LEAKS AND MISLEADING BACKGROUNDEERS DESIGNED TO SLANT AND SENSATIONALIZE LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF DEALINGS THAT IN OUR PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS HAVE USUALLY GONE MUCH MORE SMOOTHLY (SEE REF C). WHILE THESE LEAKS AND INNUENDOS ARE THE WORK OF ONE MFA PRESS OFFICER, THEY OCCUR WITH THE MINISTER'S APPARENT TACIT APPROVAL.

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9. THAILAND HAS ALSO INTENSIFIED ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS ASEAN PARTNERS IN THEIR ESPOUSAL OF A SOUTHEAST ASIAN ZONE OF PEACE, FREEDOM, AND NEUTRALITY. THESE ASEAN ASSOCIATIONS PROMISE TO BECOME A LINCHPIN IN THAILAND'S EMERGING FOREIGN POLICY. ALTHOUGH ASEAN WILL PROBABLY NOT ASSUME A FORMAL

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COLLECTIVE SECURITY FUNCTION, THE THAI DERIVE REASSURANCE FROM EVER CLOSER RELATIONS WITH THESE NEIGHBORING STATES WHICH FACE SIMILAR THOUGH LESS INTENSE SECURITY PROBLEMS. SO FAR EFFORTS WITH ASEAN REMAIN LARGELY THE PROVINCE OF MFA, WITH DUE CABINET APPROVAL, BUT WITHOUT ANY THAI MILITARY INTERFERENCE.

10. ANOTHER INDICATOR OF CHANGE IS THE SLOW AND GRADUAL, BUT NONETHELESS CONTINUOUS, IMPROVEMENT IN THAI-SOVIET RELATIONS (SEE REFS B AND D). THE SOVIETS HAVE INCREASED THEIR TRADE OFFICE STAFF, ARE PUSHING FOR A MILITARY ATTACHE AND A PRAVDA BUREAU, AND MAY SOON SIGN A CULTURAL EXCHANGE AGREEMENT WITH THE RTG. IT IS IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT IN THAI-SOVIET RELATIONS THE RUSSIANS ARE STILL THE INITIATORS; BUT THE THAI ARE NOW MERELY DRAGGING THEIR HEELS INSTEAD OF DIGGING THEM IN AS BEFORE. THIS IS ANOTHER AREA WHERE MFA AND THE MILITARY DISAGREE.

11. THIS TUG-OF-WAR WITH THE THAI MILITARY OVER FOREIGN POLICY ACCOUNTS IN LARGE MEASURE FOR CHATCHAI'S SOMETIMES ERRATIC, VOLATILE, AND PUBLICITY-CONSCIOUS STYLE. CHATCHAI ENUNCIATES FOREIGN POLICY IN A SERIES OF QUIPS AND THROWAWAY LINES. THEY SUIT HIS PERSONALITY AND HIS POLITICAL AMBITIONS, AND SERVE--NOT INCIDENTALLY--TO WIN PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR HIS POLICIES BEFORE HE ENGAGES IN THE BARGAINING PROCESS WITH THE MILITARY. HE OFTEN MANAGES TO PRESENT THE MILITARY WITH FAITS ACCOMPLIS. THE FREQUENTLY HELTER-SKELTER APPEARANCE OF THAI FOREIGN RELATIONS SOMETIMES OBSCURES BUT DOES NOT DIMINISH THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SUBSTANCE. WHILE CHATCHAI UNQUESTIONABLY HAS MADNESS IN HIS METHOD, THE CUMULATIVE RECORD SHOWS THAT THERE IS ALSO CONSIDERABLE METHOD IN HIS MADNESS.

THE REASONS BEHIND THAI FOREIGN POLICY CHANGES

12. THE CURRENT CHANGES IN THAI FOREIGN POLICY HAVE THEIR ROOTS IN THE ENDING OF THE DIRECT AMERICAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN THE INDOCHINA WAR, AND IN THE SUBSEQUENT DOWNFALL OF THE THAI MILITARY OLIGARCHY IN OCTOBER 1973. THE MOMENT WE BEGAN TO PULL OUR TROOPS OUT OF VIETNAM UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH FELL FAR SHORT OF GUARANTEEING GVN SURVIVAL,

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THAI PERCEPTIONS OF THE CONSTANCY AND HENCE VALUE OF OUR

COMMITMENT BEGAN TO ERODE. THEN CONGRESS STOPPED THE BOMBING IN CAMBODIA.

13. SHORTLY THEREAFTER THE THANOM KITTIKHACHON MILITARY GOVERNMENT FELL, AND WITH ITS FALL CAME INCREASED PUBLIC QUESTIONING ABOUT THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES THAT THANOM AND PRAPHAT HAD ALWAYS ESPOUSED. IN PART BECAUSE THANOM AND HIS SENIOR MINISTERS HAD NEVER BOTHERED TO EXPLAIN TO THE PUBLIC, ESPECIALLY TO THE ACADEMICIANS AND STUDENTS, THE ADVANTAGES TO THAILAND OF A CLOSE MILITARY AND SECURITY ASSOCIATION WITH THE U.S., THIS SUPPORT BECAME HIGHLY SUSPECT IN PUBLIC EYES.

14. THE "DE-STALINIZATION" OF THE DEPARTED THANOM CLIQUE INCLUDED AN ATTACK ON THEIR MOTIVES FOR SUCH CLOSE COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS. IN PARTICULAR, THANOM, PRAPHAT, AND OTHER SENIOR GENERALS, STOOD ACCUSED OF HAVING PROFITED ENORMOUSLY FROM THE EXTENSIVE U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE IN THAILAND. A RESURGENT NATIONALISM AND TRADITIONAL THAI SENSITIVITIES AGAINST ANY HINT OF FOREIGN EXTRATERRESTRIALITY HAVE EXACERBATED THAI PUBLIC REACTIONS AGAINST OUR TROOP PRESENCE. ALL OF THESE FACTORS HAVE OBSCURED AND DISTORTED--AND HENCE NOW LESSENED--THE VALUE OF OUR PRESENCE IN THAI EYES.

THE NEW DILEMMAS THE THAI FACE

15. THE COMBINED CHALLENGES THAT PEKING, HANOI, SAIGON, AND PHNOM PENH NOW REPRESENT LEAVE THE THAI WITH JUST THE KIND OF DIPLOMATIC DILEMMA THEY LEAST LIKE TO HAVE TO TACKLE. WITH VARIOUS WOLVES AND TIGERS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, THE THAI ARE SEEKING VARIOUS ASSURANCES TO OVERCOME THREATS, AMONG WHICH A UNIFIED INDOCHINA IS THE MOST VIVID.

16. THE RTG HAS NOT DECIDED IN ITS OWN MIND THE EXACT EXTENT, NATURE, AND TIMING OF THE NORTH VIETNAMESE MENACE TO THAI SECURITY. THERE IS A LOT OF TALK, MUCH OF IT WISHFUL BUT PROBABLY MOST OF IT BELIEVED, THAT THE VIETNAMESE WILL HAVE TO SPEND SEVERAL YEARS CONSOLIDATING THEIR ADMINISTRATION OVER SOUTH VIETNAM AND DEVELOPING VIETNAM'S ECONOMY, AND THAT

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LIKEWISE THE KHMER COMMUNISTS WILL HAVE A PERIOD OF CONSOLIDATION IN CAMBODIA. CONCURRENTLY THERE IS WIDE BELIEF THAT THE VIETNAMESE WILL STEP UP THEIR SUPPORT TO THE THAI INSURGENCY. SIMILARLY, THE RTG HAS BEEN WOOING PEKING TO IMPROVE THAI SECURITY, BUT THE EXPECTED PRESENCE OF A PRC EMBASSY IN BANGKOK RAISES THE SPECTRE OF A RECRUDESCENCE OF ETHNIC ASSERTIVENESS AMONG THE CHINESE AND SINO-THAI WHOM THE THAI HAVE NEVER TREATED TERRIBLY WELL (SEE SECTION IV OF REF E).

17. IN ALL THIS FOREBODING UNCERTAINTY,THE NEW LOOK
IN THAI FOREIGN POLICY IS MORE A QUESTION OF MEANS THAN OF
END. THE GOAL, WHICH REMAINS UNCHANGED, IS TO ARRANGE TO
HAVE OUTSIDE POWERS PROTECT THAILAND AND GUARANTEE ITS
SOVEREIGNTY. ALTHOUGH THE INSURGENCY IS LARGELY A DOMESTIC
PROBLEM, THE THAI BELIEVE THAT EVEN IT CAN BE SURMOUNTED
THROUGH JOINT DIPLOMACY.

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18. THE FALL OF INDOCHINA HAS CONFIRMED ALL OF THE THAI FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGISTS' WORST FEARS ABOUT THE RELUCTANCE OF THE U.S. TO STEP IN AND ABORT DEVELOPMENTS INIMICAL TO THAI SECURITY INTERESTS. THE CREDIBILITY OF U.S. AIR FORCE ASSETS IN THAILAND AS A DETERRENT TO NORTH VIETNAMESE
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ADVENTURIMS VANISHED AS FIRST THE KHMER COMMUNISTS AND THEN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE CLINCHED THEIR RESPECTIVE VICTORIES. THE KNOWLEDGE OF CONGRESSIONAL STRICTURES ON USE OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE IN INDOCHINA HAS DONE NOTHING TO PERSUADE OUR DETRACTORS THAT THE BENEFITS OF OUR PRESENCE TO THAILAND OUTWEIGH THE DISADVANTAGES.

19. MANY THAI ARE SUFFERING FROM CONSIDERABLE UNCERTAINTY REGARDING THE U.S. ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, ALONG WITH THEIR APPREHENSIONS ABOUT DRV INTENTIONS AND OTHER ECONOMIC AND SECURITY CHALLENGES THEY FACE. THE ADMINISTRATION'S LACK OF MENTION OF THAILAND IN SEVERAL RECENT FOREIGN POLICY STATEMENTS HAS MADE THE THAI THINK THEY ARE NO LONGER UNDER OUR PROTECTIVE UMBRELLA, NOTWITHSTANDING THE REPEATED HIGH LEVEL ASSURANCES THEY HAVE RECEIVED RECENTLY AND OVER THE YEARS REGARDING OUR DETERMINATION TO HONOR OUR COMMITMENTS. THEY VIEW THE INCREASED ROLE OF THE U.S. CONGRESS IN THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN POLICY WITH CONCERN.

CONFLICTS AND AGONIES IN THE THAI RESPONSE

20. DESPITE THE STRIDES THAT THAI FOREIGN POLICY HAS MADE TOWARDS EXPANDING RELATIONS WITH THE COMMUNIST COUNTRIES IN THE LAST YEAR AND ONE-HALF, THE HARD ISSUES OF THAI NATIONAL SECURITY POLIC REMAIN NASCENT. ONE OF THE BIG PROBLEMS IS HAMMERING OUT AN AGREED POLICY BETWEEN THE THAI MILITARY AND THE CIVILIANS, ESPECIALLY MFA.

21. THE GENERAL CIVILIAN PERCEPTION OF THE SECURITY SITUATION IS THAT THAILAND HAS VIRTUALLY NO CHOICE BUT TO SEEK A REASONABLY AMICALBE ACCOMMODATION WITH NORTH VIETNAM, WHILE AT THE SAME TIME OPENING AVENUES TO OTHER COMMUNIST COUNTRIES, PARTICULARLY THE PRC, IN AN EFFORT TO BUILD BACKFIRES AGAINST ANY UNFRIENDLY DRV INTENTIONS TOWARDS THAILAND. WHILE NO RTG LEADERS HAVE OUTSPOKENLY ADMITTED THAT THE THAI ARMY IS NO MATCH FOR THE AGGRESSIVE NORTH VIETNAMESE, THEIR ACTIONS CLEARLY INDICATE THAT THAILAND IS GOING TO TAKE A MOLLIFYING RATHER THAN A BELLICOSE STAND.

22. THAILAND IS MOVING AS FAST AS POSSIBLE, AND APPEARS

WILLING TO PAY A SUBSTANTIAL PRICE IF NECESSARY, TO ANNOUNCE

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THE OPENING OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH THE PRC AROUND JULY 1. THEREAFTER IT WILL PURUSE RELATIONS WITH THE DRV, BUT THE INITIAL STAND-OFF WITH THE DRV IN BANGKOK WAS NOT ENCOURAGING. REALTIONS WITH SAIGON REMAIN EVEN MORE PROBLEMATICAL BECAUSE OF THE UNCERTAINTY ABOUT WHO IS IN CHARGE THERE, AND HOW LONG THE SOUTH WILL REMAIN DISTINCT.

23. CONSERVATIVE ELEMENTS WITHIN THE THAI POLITY, INCLUDING THE THAI MILITARY, RECOGNIZE THAT RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE PRC, DRV, AND THE PRG IS ADVISABLE, BUT QUESTION THE HASTE WITH WHICH MFA IS PLUNGING AHEAD. WHAT THEY FEAR IS THAT MFA AND THOSE WHO SHARE ITS VIEWS, WILL, IN FACT, BE ENDANGERING THAILAND BY MAKING DEALS THAT ARE ILL CONCEIVED AND GIVING AWAY TOO MUCH IN THE BARGAINING PROCESS.

24. THE THAI MILITARY WILL BE DOING EVERYTING IT CAN TO WIN EXTRA BUDGETARY SUPPORT TO INCREASE FORCE READINESS. ONE OF THE MAJOR OUTSTANDING QUESTIONS IS WHETHER THE THAI MILITARY AND THE RTG AS A WHOLE WILL BE WILLING TO COME UP WITH, AND PUSH THROUGH PRALIAMENT, A "BUDGET OF NATIONAL SURVIVAL" THAT INVOLVES VASTLY INCREASED MILITARY SPENDING BOTH TO OFFSET DECLINING U.S. MAP AND TO ADDRESS SERIOUSLY THE INSURGENCY AND THE GROWING EXTERNAL THREAT. THOUGH THE PRESENT FIGURES IN THE FY 1976 BUDGET PREDATE THE RECENT COLLAPSE OF INDOCHINA, THEY DO CONTAIN A WHOPPING INCREASE IN SECURITY EXPENDITURES RESULTING FROM THE DECISION TO GO AHEAD WITH A MASSIVE EXPANSION OF MANYELEMENTS OF THE NATIONAL POLICE THAT RELATE TO COUNTERINSURGENCY. WITH EXCELLENT FOREIGN EXCHANGE RESERVES AND A LIMITED FOREIGN DEBT, THAILAND DOES HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO SPEND MORE ON DEFENSE. IT CAN RAISE TAXES OR GO INTO DEBT IF NEED BE WHEN IT FEELS THREATENED.

25. THERE IS A WIDESPREAD RECOGNITION OF THE NEEDTO STRENGTHEN THE SOCIETY BY LESSENING THE SOCIAL INEQUALITIES AND THE DISPARITIES IN THE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH.CONCURRENTLY, THERE ARE AGAIN PLANS AFOOT TO CHANGE THE ORGANIZATION, LEADER-SHIP, AND ADMINSTRATION OF THE THAI COUNTERINSURGENCY EFFORT. CHANGES IN RTG COUNTERINSURGENCY POLICY OFTEN SPEND THEMSELVES IN THE TALKING STAGE,BUT THE CURRENT NEW THRUST SEEMS TO INVOLVE THE ARMY FOCUSING ON THE CONVENTIONAL EXTERNAL THREAT AND THE POLICE AND PARAMILITARY FORCES BEARING THE PRIMARY

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RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INSURGENCY. THE ARMY REMAINS ENGAGED
AGAINST INSURGENTS IN THE NORTHEAST, HOWEVER.

26. IN THE FINAL ANALYSIS MUCH MORE THAN MILITARY PROWESS
WILL BE NECESSARY FOR THE RTG TO DEFEAT THE INSURGENCY,
NOT TO MENTION NIBBLING ENROACHMENTS BY HANOI. AND NO AMOUNT
OF EXTERNAL AID AND ADVICE IS LIKELY TO MAKE THE THAI ARMED
FORCES VIABLE AGAINST EITHER A CONVENTIONAL EXTERNAL ATTACK
OR AN EXTERNALLY ENHANCED INSURGENCY, UNLESS THE THAI MAKE
SOME DIFFICULT DECISIONS ABOUT USING THEIR OWN RESOURCES AND
THE RTG ESTABLISHES AND PURSUES VIGOROUSLY A VIABLE COUNTER-
INSURGENCY POLICY.

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27. IN THE SHORT TIME SINCE THE NEW THREAT HAS APPEARED,
THE RTG HAS SHOWN LITTLE PURPOSEFUL MOVEMENT TOWARD MEETING
IT. THE THAI DO HAVE A SENSE THAT SOMETHING OUGHT TO BE DONE,
HOWEVER, AND IT WOULD BE ASKING A LOT, GIVEN THEIR PAST
RECORD AND THE MAGNITUDE OF THEIR PROBLEMS, TO EXPECT THEM TO
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BE UNDERWAY ALREADY. THE THAI NEVERTHELESS ARE MORE LIKELY TO
ACCOMMODATE TO THE INSURGENCY THAN TO SUPPRESS IT VIOIOUSLY. IT
IS INTERESTING THAT DESPITE DIFFERING VIEWS OF HOW TO CONDUCT
THAI FOREIGN RELATIONS, NOBODY IN THE THAI BODY POLITIC IS
ADVOCATING STRONG AND DIFFICULT INTERNAL POLICIES AND MEASURES
TO SOLVE THE IMMEDIATE SECURITY, POLICIAL, ECONOMIC, AND
SOCIAL PROBLEMS. MFA WILL COUNSEL CONCILIATION WITH COMMUNIST
COUNTRIES AS AN EXTERNAL SOLUTION, AND THE MILITARY WILL ENCOURAGE
THE POLICE AND THE VILLAGE DEFENSE CORPS TO GRAPPLE WITH THE
INSURGENTS.

THE U.S. AND THAILAND AS FACTORS IN EACH OTHER'S THINKING.

28. THE NATURE OF THAILAND'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES
HAS ALREADY CHANGED CONSIDERABLY FROM WHAT IT WAS SEVERAL
YEARS AGO, BUT REMAINS IN A STATE OF FLUX BECAUSE OF THE
UNCERTAINTY AND CONFUSION IN VIRTUALLY ALL FACTORS AFFECTING THE
RELEVANT EQUATIONS SUCH AS DRV INTENTIONS AND TIME-TABLE TOWARDS
THAILAND; PRC INTERESTS IN THAILAND AND THEIR POSSIBLE CONFLICT
WITH HANOI'S; AND UNCERTAINTY REGARDING LONG-TERM U.S.
POLICY TOWARDS SOUTHEAST ASIA IN GENERAL, AND THAILAND IN
PARTICULAR. MOREOVER, THAILAND NOW HAS A DIFFERENT DOMESTIC
POLITICAL SITUATION THAT IMPINGES CONSIDERABLY ON ITS FOREIGN
POLICY DELIBERATIONS AND EXPLANATION PROCESSES. THE THAI PER-
CEIVE THAT THE U.S. HAS NO APPARENT INTENTION TO AGAIN IN-
VOLVE ITSELF DIRECTLY MILITARILY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA.

29. DESPITE THAI UNEASINESS ABOUT U.S. POLICY AS IT
AFFECTS THEM, THAI FOREIGN POLICY STRATEGISTS STILL
FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT THE U.S. DOES NOT HAVE SOME
GRAND DESIGN FOR THE POST-VIETNAM WAR EAR THAT WE SIMPLY HAVE
NOT SEEN FIT TO CONFIDE TO THEM. PART OF THIS FEELING IS THE
RECENT BUT STRONG THAI TRADITION OF ANCHORING THEIR FOREIGN
POLICY TO THE U.S.; AND PART OF IT IS THE FOND HOPE THAT IN
SOME REMARKABLE BUT ELUSIVE WAY WE WILL AT THE LAST MINUTE SAVE
THEM FROM ALL THE PROBLEMS THEY DO NOT WANT TO HAVE TO FACE

THEMSELVES.

30. COMPLICATING THE ABOVE QUANDARIES ARE THE TWO DISTINCT MESSAGES WE RECEIVE FROM THE THAI AS TO WHAT THEY WISH WE WOULD DO WITH OUR MILITARY PRESENCE HERE. THE PRIVATE
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MESSAGE FROM TOP THAI MILITARY LEADERS IS THAT THEY WANT US TO STAY, PREFERABLY INDEFINITELY AND PREFERABLY WITH ENOUGH FORCE TO DO SOME GOOD. THEIR BASIC INTEREST IN SEEING US STAY HERE IS TO INCREASE THE CHANCES OF OUR CONTINUED GENEROUS MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND OF OUR BECOMING ENGAGED IN THAILAND'S DEFENSE WHEN THE NEED ARISES. THE OFFICIAL PUBLIC MESSAGE FROM THE RTG, WHICH ITS CIVILIAN LEADERS REAFFIRM PRIVATELY, IS THAT OUR FORCES ARE TO BE GONE BY MARCH 1976.

31. THE MILITARY LEADERS WHO ENCOURAGE US PRIVATELY TO STAY ARE UNWILLING TO SAY SO PUBLICLY, AND PROBABLY REALIZE THAT IN PRACTICAL TERMS WE HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PUBLICLY STATED OFFICIAL RTG MESSAGE. HOWEVER MUCH THEY MAY REGRET IT, THESE MILITARY LEADERS REALIZE THAT THEY CURRENTLY SEEM UNLIKELY TO RETURN TO POLITICAL POWER UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES THAT WOULD MAKE A CLOSE U.S.-THAI SECURITY RELATIONSHIP POSSIBLE, IN LARGE MEASURE BECAUSE OF THE ALMOST CERTAIN OUTRAGE THAT SUCH A RETURN TO THE STATUS QUO ANTE WOULD OCCASION AMONG STUDENTS, ACADEMICS, AND EVEN THE EDUCATED MIDDLE CLASS.

32. BOTH BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTIES OF HAMMERING OUT AN AGREED POSITION BETWEEN MFA AND THE THAI MILITARY OVER OUR ROLE AND PRESENCE, AND BECAUSE THEY BOTH SEE BENEFITS IN HAVING US TAKE THE INITIATIVE WITH REGARD TO THE DETAILS OF OUR OWN WITHDRAWAL, THE RTG IS MOST UNLIKELY TO PRESENT US WITH ANY REASONED PROPOSALS. CONCURRENTLY, THE THAI ASSUME A CONTINUED MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM, THOUGH THEY ARE UNEASY ABOUT ITS DIMINISHING SIZE.

WHEN ALL THE PROBLEMS COME TO A HEAD.

33. SEVERAL FACTORS BEARING ON THAI FOREIGN POLICY WILL BE FALLING INTO PLACE FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE IN THE NEXT SEVERAL MONTHS. THE FIRST OF THESE IS THE PRIME MINISTER'S IMMINENT TRIP TO PEKING TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT ESTABLISHING THAI-PRC DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS, BUT LEAVING THE MANY DIFFICULT DETAILS TO BE RESOLVED IN LATER NEGOTIATIONS. NONETHELESS, THE THAI SHOULD GAIN FROM THIS VISIT A CLEARER IDEA OF JUST HOW THE CHINESE VIEW THE NORTH VIETNAMESE VICTORY IN INDOCHINA, AND WHAT THEY ARE PREPARED TO DO TO PRESERVE CHINESE INFLUENCE IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA. THE LOGICAL
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EXTENSION OF THESE CHINESE DECISIONS WILL BE WHAT PEKING IS WILLING TO DO TO HELP THAILAND RESIST NORTH VIETNAMESE ENCROACHMENTS, AND WHAT THEY WILL DEMAND IN RETURN FROM BANGKOK.

34. THE BUDGET DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT ALSO SHOULD GIVE BOTH THE RTG AND OTHER OBSERVERS SOME CLEARER IDEAS OF HOW WELL THAILAND IS GOING TO RESPOND TO THE CHALLENGES IT FACES. NOT ONLY WILL THE BUDGET DEBATE DETERMINE THE ADQUACY OF THE RTG SECURITY BUDGET, BUT IT WILL ALSO HAVE PROFOUND EFFECTS ON THE KHUKRIT GOVERNMENT'S FUTURE AND HENCE THE WHOLE COURSE OF THAI DOMESTIC POLITICS.

35. LATER THIS YEAR, OR WHENEVER THE THAI PAY A RETURN VISIT TO HANOI, THE THAI SHOULD GET THE FINAL READING ON THE THRUST OF THINGS TO COME FROM THAT QUARTER. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT THEY DO NOT ALREADY HAVE AN UNCOMFORTABLY GOOD IDEA OF WHAT THEY ARE UP AGAINST, BUT THE MESSAGE IS NOT YET INELUCTABLE.

36. AT SOME EARLY TIME IT WOULD NOT SURPRISE US TO SEE THE BEGINNINGS OF SELECTIVE BUT EASILY IDENTIFIABLE AND SIGNIFICANT INCREASES IN DRV SUPPORT FOR THE THAI INSURGENTS, PROBABLY IN THE NORTHEAST WHERE THE VIETNAMESE FACE LESS COMPETITION FROM THE CHINESE. THIS KIND OF STEPPED UP SUPPORT WILL AIM CHIEFLY TO PUT POLITICAL PRESSURE ON THE THAI TO START PUTTING REAL MEANING INTO THEIR ACCOMMODATION WITH THE NEW MANAGEMENT IN INDOCHINA.

37. WE EXPECT THAT, NOTWITHSTANDING THAI SCEPTICISM REGARDING OUR FUTURE SECURITY ROLE HERE, THE THAI WILL PERCEIVE THAT CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. ARE DESIRABLE EVEN IF THOSE TIES ARE NOT PRIMARILY IN THE SECURITY FIELD. OTHER ASEAN LEADERS, WHO REGARD THAILAND AS BOTH THE WEAKEST REED IN THE ASSOCIATION AND ALSO THE MOST THREATENED, ARE LIKELY TO URGE THAILAND TO RETAIN THIS U.S. CONNECTION.
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